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**REPORT ON THE MARCH 18, 1990 PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS  
IN  
THE GERMAN DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC**

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U.S. Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe  
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## SUMMARY

- The unexpected landslide victory of the East Christian Democratic Union (CDU), reformed ally of the former Communist regime, indicates the strong East German desire for rapid unification. The CDU and its conservative Alliance for Germany coalition won almost 50% of the vote. The CDU's top priority is monetary union.
- This was the first free, multiparty election in the GDR. All parties agreed that there had been no government interference with the campaign. There were no charges of fraud and both the GDR Electoral Commission and foreign observers testified to the fairness of the election.
- The leading political parties of the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) played a key role in organizing and funding counterpart parties in the GDR. These new parties largely mirrored the policies and philosophies of their West German sponsors.
- The legacy of 40 years of totalitarian rule is dogging the new government as accusations surface that many of the new legislators collaborated with the hated secret police (STASI) in the past. Although the GDR cast an unequivocal vote for democracy, unification, and a market economy, the ambiguities of the past may make it difficult for the new leadership to deal with the challenges of the present.
- The Alliance for Germany has moved quickly to form a coalition government with the 2/3 majority needed to change the Constitution in order to proceed with unification. They have invited the centrist Alliance of Free Democrats, and the Social Democratic Party (SPD) to join them. The FDP has agreed while the SDP is negotiating with the CDU. Among SPD demands are that a future government should immediately recognize the current border with Poland, reaffirm existing ownership rights in the GDR, and promote social welfare and worker participation in corporate decisions.
- The election results are a great personal victory for FRG Chancellor Helmut Kohl, who promised GDR voters that he would push rapid unification and a 1:1 exchange rate for Deutsche and East marks. If he fails to deliver on either count, his stock could fall rapidly.
- The relatively poor showing of the SPD (22%), which had been expected to win the most seats, was probably due to its failure to articulate a distinctive message. The SPD supported a gradual process of unification, following detailed negotiations and lots of fine-tuning. This moderate, nuanced approach displeased most voters, who gave uncategorical approval for rapid unification.
- The vote did not reflect an East German desire to see a unified Germany in NATO. Nevertheless, it does strengthen Kohl, who favors continued NATO membership.

- The relatively large vote of 16% for the reformed Communist Party, the Party of Democratic Socialism (only 6% less than the SPD received), leaves them in a good position to be a trouble-making opposition.

## POLITICAL LANDSCAPE

On March 18, in the first completely free elections in post-war Eastern Europe, the citizens of the German Democratic Republic (GDR) cast an unequivocal vote for pluralism and the rule-of-law by electing a new government of pro-democracy reformers, many from former governing parties and some from newly-created opposition parties and movements. The vote also completed the repudiation of the discredited Communist Party (known as the Socialist Unity Party or by its German acronym SED).

The election was also a plebiscite on unification, the issue which came to dominate the campaign in the weeks after the November 9, 1989 breaching of the Berlin Wall at the Brandenburg Gate. The destruction of the quintessential symbol of the division of the two Germanys and Eastern Europe apparently led many Germans in the East and West to believe that unity within the relative near-future was indeed possible. Many West German politicians, most notably Chancellor Helmut Kohl, fanned this hope into a fervent desire, so that by March 18, unification was a certainty and at issue was the timing and conditions for achieving it. Indeed, unification or "Kohl-inization" fever conquered almost all of the GDR political spectrum, including the Party of Social Democracy (the PDS, the SED's cleaned-up successors).

The backdrop to the astonishing chain of events unfolding in the GDR during the latter half of 1989 was the relentless hemorrhage of East Germans to the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG). From August through December, 344,000 East Germans fled to the West, generating a near crisis atmosphere on both sides of the border as leaders realized the potentially destabilizing effect the exodus could have in both countries. Those who left tended to be the young and skilled, the lifesblood of any society. Exposed by television, radio, and personal contact to the wealth of their brethren in the West, they had become increasingly frustrated by their comparatively poor standard of living. So they left to pursue the affluence of the West, and their mass departure began the process of discrediting the GDR's Communist leadership.

Compounding the impact of the hundreds of thousands of people literally voting with their feet was the sound of the voices raised by those who chose to stay in order to confront the corrupt regime of Erich Honecker. The huge demonstrations in southern industrial centers such as Leipzig, Dresden, and Karl-Marx-Stadt, and the massive rallies in Berlin, especially during the October visit of Soviet General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev for the country's 40th anniversary, shook the regime to its very roots.

In the end, the combination of ever-growing dissent at home and the massive emigration of those who refused to wait for change undermined the morally bankrupt SED regime with breathtaking rapidity and seeming inexorability. Gorbachev's role in speeding Honecker's demise cannot be overlooked. His decision to deny support to the hard-line regime of Honecker and to issue some harsh criticism behind-the-scenes gave a

green light to would-be reformers in the party as well as to opposition movements in Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria, and Romania.

The newness of the democratic experience formed the immediate setting for the election as the parties and electorate prepared in haste and confusion for the GDR's first free election. Electioneering was a new, and never entirely mastered, art for its many neophyte practitioners, despite help from the FRG. This inexperience was compounded by the precious little time available to parties and associations to organize themselves. Many barely had time to develop rudimentary platforms and skeletal staffs that had to get the message out via an inadequate media. The shortage of time and manpower affected the conduct of the campaign as did the obscurity of the new candidates.

The dire situation of the fledgling political parties issued a siren call to the large, well-organized parties in the FRG who saw the GDR election as a proxy for their own national battle coming in December. Once the FRG parties began to find Eastern allies to sponsor with funding, equipment, and technical expertise, the floodgates were open and local campaigners sometimes got lost in the shuffle. Hence, the campaign saw small, sparsely attended rallies in churches and school auditoriums where native-grown politicians presented their views juxtaposed with huge, open-air rallies that drew hundreds of thousands -- to see West German politicians. Pragmatists in the GDR realized that FRG politicians such as Willy Brandt, Hans-Dietrich Genscher, and Chancellor Kohl were a big drawing card for voters and the media alike. Furthermore, an East German party gained in popularity by association with its prominent FRG sponsor. This was particularly true of the CDU which benefitted greatly from its association with Kohl's CDU, the ruling FRG Party, the party that led a parliamentary majority, and thereby controlled the purse strings.

Gradually, though, this appreciation was countered to some extent by the realization that the FRG parties were as concerned with their own electoral chances as they were with those of their GDR counterpart and that the transference of popularity to a new GDR Party did nothing to help the new party leadership attain recognition. In the end, the newly-formed GDR parties had no alternate to FRG support and they took it, although egos were increasingly bruised, especially after Chancellor Kohl brusquely received GDR Prime Minister Modrow in Bonn in mid-February.

All parties found that the best way to reach the electorate was through the electronic media. GDR television and radio made time available to parties to advertise and discuss their platforms in addition to carrying news reports on the parties and the campaign. West German television and radio also had extensive election coverage in the form of talk shows and profiles of parties. Many observers felt that the GDR media favored the PDS while the FRG media ignored the born-again Communists, essentially negating the bias.

The key issue of the election was the pace and direction of unification, although differences among parties were those of emphasis rather than ideology. After the Kohl-Modrow meeting, a consensus formed in the GDR in favor of a step-by-step process involving some form of negotiation between the FRG and the GDR on the economic, legal, and social aspects of unification. Of the major parties, only the German Social Union (DSU) advocated immediate unification using Article 23 of the West German basic law. (Article 23 allows pre-war German territories to vote to rejoin the FRG.) Those parties and associations on the right of the spectrum favor a fairly rapid process while those on the left would prefer to see the process move more slowly.

Fear about the social and economic dislocations inherent in the change from a command to a market economy led to widespread anxiety in the weeks leading up to the election. Alarms rose that in a unified Germany rents would rise astronomically, pensions would plummet, and unemployment would abound. Thus, the enthusiasm for a Western-style market economy began to be tempered as the negative aspects of unification with an economic powerhouse started to dawn on the populace and the stable, albeit dead-end, world they knew began to dissolve. Like political parties everywhere, the GDR parties sought to be all things to all people without spelling out their proposals in much detail. As with unification, on the issue of the economy there is a striking similarity of views with all of the parties supporting "social market economies," that would bring the prosperity of capitalism but retain the protections offered by socialism.

Although all of the major players campaigned in support of unification and a social market economy, there were slight differences in tone as a comparison of the key features of their platforms demonstrates. The CDU supports relatively quick unification; a social market economy with the stress on implementing reforms that would allow private and foreign ownership and place little control on foreign investment; a 1:1 conversion of GDR savings into Deutsche marks (DM); and greater conservation efforts; and more efficient use of the polluting, noxious lignite coal combined with the gradual replacement of it with other energy sources. Democratic Awakening (DA) and the DSU, the other members of the conservative Alliance for Germany coalition, have similar views, with the previously noted exception that DSU favors immediate accession to the FRG via article 23 of the basic law.

The SPD's election platform, on the other hand, advocated a relatively gradual unification process, including the drafting of a new Constitution; social market economy with the emphasis on social; 1:1 conversion of savings into DM; and a German-German ecological partnership; a 50% reduction in energy use within 10 years; and a widening of energy sources to include natural gas, oil, lignite, and alternative fuels.

The Alliance of Free Democrats, consisting of the centrist Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), the Free Democratic Party (FDP), and the German Forum Party, seeks quick unification within a European framework and confederative structures for currency

convertibility and close economic cooperation; a social, ecological market economy that would create a positive environment for small and medium-sized firms; 1:1 exchange rate; and pro-environmental legislation.

In the most striking irony of the election, the PDS, reformist heirs to the SED, had to do an embarrassing about-face on unification in deference to the overwhelming popular support for it. As the SED justified the existence of the GDR on the basis of its Communist ideology, it must have been quite painful for its successors to run on a platform advancing unification with its capitalist rival. Moreover, the rival clearly had the upper hand and its system would provide the guiding principles of the new state. The PDS basically followed a strategy of damage limitation throughout the campaign, stressing that the unification process should take place slowly.

In perhaps the second most striking irony of the election, the scorned PDS ran a highly effective campaign. They deftly exploited the electorate's fear of the unknown and its unwillingness to admit that East Germany will bring nothing of value into a united Germany. Playing to fears that capitalism would create many losers in GDR society, they greatly qualified their approval of a social market economy and placed the stress on protection of the "GDR's social achievements." Their environmental platform supported conservation efforts, reduction of dependency on lignite, the use of natural gas, and repair of 40 years of economic devastation, wrought, it should be added, by their ideological forebears.

Coalition '90, comprises three left-leaning "people's movements," which decided not to become parties. They are New Forum, the first opposition group to emerge from the autumn revolution; Democracy Now; and the Initiative for Peace and Human Rights. On unification, they advocate a slow process that will "do things right," whether it took 6 months or several years. They are in favor of a social market economy with freedom for small businesses, an opening for foreign investment; and a mix of all forms of ownership. Deeply concerned with grassroots issues, Coalition '90 advanced a stringent environmental program in the campaign, including an end to the use of lignite and atomic energy and priority attention to cleaning up the southern industrial areas.

The question of past internal associations also played a key role in the election, both as an issue and as a factor which colored the mood of the campaign. Just as affiliation with a West German political party affected a party's support, so did association or non-association with the discredited SED regime contribute to a party's standing. In the early stages of the campaign, the new parties or associations such as the SPD and New Forum benefitted from their untarnished records. As time went on, they lost popularity because while they had clearly stated what they were against, they failed to articulate what they were for.

Conversely, the PDS, in spite of the refurbishing of personnel and name, never overcame the stigma of the miserable SED record. Its former bloc party allies also suffered, although the CDU and LDP which reformed themselves to some extent were obviously not hurt as badly by past associations as were the National Democratic Party and the Peasants' Party. Of course, the last two also lacked FRG sponsors, which magnified the disadvantages against them.

Although all the parties sought to use past associations, either of the GDR Party or the FRG counterpart, to sling mud on each other, the issue took on new significance only 3 days before the election when Wolfgang Schnur, leader of DA, resigned when allegations of his past collaboration with the secret police (STASI) were proved. Schnur, a lawyer, had initially denied accusations that he had informed on his clients but finally acknowledged their accuracy. Claiming that no one had ever suffered as a result of his spying, his final defense was that he had tried to make the fewest and most humane compromises possible in an inhuman system.

His words struck a deep chord in the minds of many East Germans, and many of his former friends, including SPD leader Ibrahim Boehme, acknowledged the truth of his words. In the rush to unify and identify with the FRG, some East Germans saw a desire to leave untouched the country's painful history of the past 40 years. In a nation of 16 million, the STASI had 194,000 employees and about 500,000 informers. With so many implicated, to some degree, in the misrule of the SED regime, it is a past that cannot be easily swept away. As events in the immediate aftermath of the election would show, the question of complicity with the old regime would come to the forefront of the daunting issues facing the new, democratically-elected government.

## **THE ELECTION LAW AND CAMPAIGNING**

The German Democratic Republic (GDR) election on March 18 was guided and supervised by the GDR Electoral Commission, which comprised two representatives from each party and association participating in the round table negotiations. The members elected their chair, Petra Blaess, a member of the Independent Women's Association, and deputy chairpersons by secret ballot. This procedure was also followed by the electoral commissions set up at the district level. In addition to the national and district electoral commissions, each precinct set up electoral committees to staff and oversee voting in the individual voting stations. Candidates for the Volkskammer were not allowed to be members of these electoral committees.

During a meeting with Commission staff, members of the Electoral Commission were unanimous in their agreement that the Commission had functioned fairly and efficiently, with all members putting aside partisan concerns as they cooperated on leading the country to its first free, multiparty election. Those present at the session included

representatives of Democracy Now, the Alternative Youth List, the Liberal Democratic Party, and the Party of Democratic Socialism.

Voters went to the polls on March 18 to choose new members for the 400-seat Volkskammer or national parliament, which is the supreme legislative authority in the GDR. Each eligible voter was permitted to cast a ballot in his/her home district for one party's or association's slate of candidates; no quota of seats was set aside for organizations. Parties and associations had to run different slates of candidates in each district where they contested the election.

The electoral law, whose jurisdiction was limited to the March 18 election, stipulated that every GDR citizen 18 years and older was eligible to vote. The only exceptions were: people who were under the care of a guardian; people stripped of their civil rights as a result of a final judgment; and people committed to psychiatric institutions because of an abnormal mental dysfunction, as well as citizens who have been placed under temporary guardianship or under curatorship because of mental handicaps.

Anyone over 18 was allowed to run as a candidate, with the exceptions noted above as well as individuals in the process of serving prison sentences. Political parties and associations were empowered to nominate candidates for individual electoral districts in a binding sequence. They could nominate up to four candidates more than there were seats in the district.

In order to acquire official registration, a candidate had to be chosen by a quorum of the party or association, voting by secret ballot. The nominating organization also had to submit at least 1,000 signed petitions from citizens eligible to vote in the electoral district, plus background information about the candidate(s) and the organization, evidence of the candidate's eligibility to run, and proof of the leadership's approval of the candidacy. Candidates were also required, under the election law, to have "stable links with their electoral district."

The electoral law split the country into 15 districts, retaining the administrative division of the country instituted by the former SED leadership, which had abolished the five former laender (German states). There were 22,000 voting districts within the 15 electoral districts. By law, no voting district could comprise more than 1,500 voters, nor could it be so small that the secrecy of the vote would be at risk. The GDR Electoral Commission decided how many seats each electoral district received.

At one point this winter, there were over 150 new political parties and associations in the GDR. After a shaking down period, this number consolidated to the still daunting figure of 44. Of those 44, 24 finally fulfilled the registration requirements necessary to field candidates in the election, although not all of them ran slates of candidates in every

district. The Beer Drinkers Union, for example, only got on the ballot in the Rostock District.

The most distinctive feature of the electoral law was the allocation of seats by strict proportional representation. Based on the West German Hare/Niemeyer system, the GDR system differed significantly by having no minimum vote requirement to win representation whereas, in the FRG system a party must win at least 5% of the vote to receive seats in the Bundestag. By contrast, to win a seat in the 400-member GDR Parliament, a candidate had to receive only 0.25% of the total vote, or support from about 25,000 voters out of an electorate of 12.2 million.

An elaborate formula, reflecting Teutonic precision, was devised to determine the number of seats a party or association received from each of the 15 districts. By basing the calculation on the ratio of a group's percentage of the national vote to its percentage of the vote in a particular district, the distribution of seats followed the district voting as closely as possible and also ensured that as few votes as possible were forfeited in the process. Indeed, the GDR Electoral Commission proudly asserted that their election was going to be more democratic than those in the United States because our winner-take-all system rendered many votes meaningless.

If the proportional system set up for the March 18 election demonstrated a concern for democracy at its purist, the actual campaign often reflected unadulterated, hard-ball politicking, especially as the participation of the well-established West German parties increasingly came to dominate the political landscape. Hence, East German campaigning styles ran the gamut from small assemblies of first-time voters and neophyte politicians who earnestly discussed the issues in an atmosphere distinctly devoid of Western-style hype to huge, well-orchestrated rallies featuring West German superstars such as Willy Brandt and Chancellor Helmut Kohl. Although many East Germans came to resent the omnipresent FRG influence, most of them, nevertheless, enthusiastically responded to the West German politicians' promise of quick, if not entirely painless, economic reform that would open the way to the West's affluence.

In the view of many observers, not only was the campaigning overtaken by West German parties but the election itself became a referendum on the FRG parties. Indeed, many viewed the campaign as a battle of surrogates in which the actual GDR candidates played a supporting role in relation to their famous West German sponsors. GDR intellectuals, who tended to belong to small, leftist parties and associations such as Neues Forum, felt that their countrymen were abdicating the chance to take control of their destinies, preferring the easier course of making the FRG responsible for picking up the tab for the reform process. This minority group believes that there may be a backlash someday as East Germans belatedly realize they forfeited the opportunity to find "a third way" between capitalism and communism, opting instead for a Western market economy, warts and all.

Some Western observers have noted, however, that this attitude reveals East German ignorance of the extensive safety net in place in most West European countries, including the FRG where many benefits are actually much better than those in the GDR. For example, pensioners in the GDR draw average monthly benefits of 420 East Marks while a West German retiree receives an average pension of Deutsche Mark (DM) 1,094 (official exchange rate is 3 East Marks to 1 DM).

Before the FRG presence grew so strong, the new opposition parties and associations had worried that the PDS's entrenched organization and established access to funding, resources, and media coverage would limit their ability to wage a full-fledged campaign. As it turned out, those East German parties that found West German sponsors, such as the liberal Social Democrats (SPD), the conservative Alliance for Germany, and the centrist Alliance of Free Democrats, received generous funding and equipment as well as airtime on FRG television, thus more or less neutralizing the advantages of the PDS. Those parties or movements that did not associate themselves with West German parties, and particularly those not represented at the round table negotiations between the Government and the opposition, were the ones who lacked adequate funding and media coverage.

The round table's decision to advance the election from May 6 to March 18 also hurt the smaller, less well-organized groups, but most East Germans felt that with the Modrow government teetering on the edge of collapse the need to establish a legitimate government took priority over all other considerations. Moreover, the similarity of platforms among the competing parties and associations made it unlikely that a particular viewpoint would not be publicly aired as a result of condensing the campaign time.

Despite the widespread resentment at the dominating West German role in the campaign and the feeling of some small parties that they were eclipsed by parties that had the advantage of FRG funding and material assistance, no one seemed to interpret these as unfair factors which distorted the election results; rather, many viewed them as inevitable developments, given the circumstances surrounding the election. In fact, all parties agreed that they had absolute freedom to campaign as they pleased.

The most significant complaint centered on the defacement and removal of campaign posters. All of the parties, including the former bloc parties, were in unanimous agreement that this low-level thuggery was the work of the PDS, although no party or individual offered any proof to support this allegation. The Democratic Social Union (DSU), the most conservative of the mainstream parties and a member of the Alliance for Germany coalition, complained that it had been denied services such as telephone installation. This complaint was somewhat skeptically received in many quarters because it was unsubstantiated and seemingly mirrored the tactics of innuendo for which the DSU's FRG sister party the Christian Social Union (CSU) is notorious.

The GDR Electoral Commission also received several procedural complaints, the most widespread concerning the election's inability to accommodate absentee voting. Although the Commission arranged for voting to take place at GDR Embassies, they lacked the time and technical facilities to cope with absentee registration and voting on a large scale, so many East Germans residing or traveling abroad were, in effect, disenfranchised.

Political parties that formed after the deadline for official registration also complained that they were unable to field candidates, but, given the proliferation of new parties since autumn, this issue did not elicit much concern.

Another issue which did not provoke controversy inside the GDR was the Electoral Commission's decision to ban the neo-Nazi West German Republikaner Party from running candidates in the March 18 election. The electoral law specifically excluded: "parties or political associations that express hatred against denominations, races, and peoples that engage in military propaganda or baiting for war from the elections." A companion law on political parties and associations also prohibited the formation of a East German Republikaner party.

When questioned about this limit on participation in the election, the Electoral Commission at first denied that it, in any way, limited the democratic process. Helsinki Commission staff pursued this point, asserting that some might interpret it as demonstrating a paternalistic attitude toward voters by not trusting them to reject the message of the Republikaners at the polls. Grudgingly, the Electoral Commission admitted that there was some validity to this view, but they insisted that, first, East Germany's special history made it necessary and that, second, there was practically unanimous support for this restriction. An unspoken third point may also have figured prominently in East German thinking; namely, in light of the intense international scrutiny focused on the election, officials scrupulously sought to keep the lid on skinheads, incipient Republikaners, and other hate groups that could revive foreign fears of a resurgence of nazism in the GDR.

Outside of the official complaints lurked a larger one that never saw public discussion but was nevertheless very much present in the minds of countless East Germans. Stemming from the widespread fear that the much-hated secret police, the STASI, was still operating in isolated pockets in rural areas, many citizens apparently believed that their actions were being monitored and that they would be subjected to STASI retribution if they did not vote for the PDS. It was impossible to determine to what extent this fear was justifiable and to what extent the sad legacy of 40 years of totalitarian rule. Nor, in light of the CDU's sweeping victory, is it evident that this fear of harassment actually dampened support for other parties.

## THE BALLOTING AND RESULTS

In an attempt to ensure the largest possible voter turnout, the Electoral Commission made it the responsibility of the Government to inform citizens of their eligibility to vote. Because there was not enough time to delete from the registers the names of the 344,000 East Germans who emigrated to the FRG in 1989, the rosters included these as well as the names of the thousands who have since January 1, 1990. Citizens received a written notification of their eligibility to vote, called a ballot paper, and were required to bring this form with them when they voted. The Government also had to provide written statements to citizens ineligible to vote which included the reasons for their ineligibility. All those adjudged ineligible had the right of appeal before their district court. Individuals who, because of administrative error, never received formal notification of their eligibility to vote were instructed to go to the local electoral committee and apply for registration.

Citizens who were not going to be in their home voting district on election day were given a document which allowed them to vote in any other voting district within their electoral district. The Electoral Commission arranged for ballots to be brought directly to shut-ins and hospitalized individuals. In addition, elderly and disabled persons were permitted to be accompanied into the voting stations and booths by a trusted individual.

The voting stations were open from 5 a.m. until 6 p.m. The electoral committees publicly counted the blank ballots before the election. They then certified that they had received the correct number and that they were in perfect condition. A similar procedure was followed to ensure that ballot boxes were not tampered with before they were sealed.

Upon showing personal identification, a voter received a voting slip and his/her name was checked off on the official register. Ballots contained the name of each party or association, its acronym, and the names of its first three candidates. In a conscious rejection of the past era of rigged, meaningless elections, the voter was required by law to go behind a booth to vote in secrecy. The voter indicated his/her choice by making a mark in the circle next to the name of the party he/she supported. The voter then sealed the voting slip in an envelope. The voter gave the ballot paper to the electoral committee worker, who crossed the individual's name off of another copy of the official register before allowing the voter to deposit the slips in the ballot box. Voters were required to give their ballot papers to polling station workers in order to prevent them from going to other voting stations to vote again.

On a bizarre related note, there was a flurry of concern during the last few days before the election that STASI members would try to rig the results by voting several times. A rumor began circulating that, in their former role as the regime's covert and ubiquitous presence, STASI members had been "provided with" multiple identities, including the documentation to support the lie. The fear was that they would attempt to

vote at different polling stations, using their various identity cards. As with the previously mentioned scare that the STASI were intimidating voters in rural areas, this alarm defies easy categorization into its real and imaginary components.

After the polls closed, the electoral committees, which included representatives of all the registered parties and associations, began counting the votes in public, including determining which ballots were invalid. Every member of the committee had to verify the results. The results were conveyed by courier and telephone to the district electoral commissions, which then passed them on to the GDR Electoral Commission in East Berlin. In Berlin, the figures were re-verified by computer. By early evening, the contours of the dramatic upset were becoming clear, but the final tally was not available until around 2:00.

## RESULTS

The election law stipulated that repeat elections were to be held within 2 weeks in any district that had a turnout below 50%. In fact, the turnout in all districts was higher than 50%, with the total percentage reaching an impressive 93.2. The breakdown of the vote was as follows:

<u>PARTY</u>	<u>% of the vote</u>	<u>Seats in Parliament</u>
CDU	40.9	164
DSU	6.3	25
Democratic Awakening	0.9	4
<b>Alliance for Germany (total)</b>	<b>48.1</b>	<b>193</b>
SPD	21.8	87
PDS (formerly SED)	16.3	65
Union of Free Democratic	5.3	21
Alliance 90 (New Forum, Initiative for Peace and Human Rights, Democracy Now)	2.9	12
Democratic Farmers Party	2.19	9
Greens and Independent Women's Union	1.96	8
National Democratic Party	0.39	2
Democratic Women's Union	0.33	1
United Left	0.18	1
Alternative Youth List	0.13	1

The GDR Electoral Commission declared the elections fair and valid, a determination corroborated by international observers, including a Council of Europe delegation. The Commission reported receiving a few calls from individuals who had moved in recent months and whose names had not been placed on the election register in their new districts. These persons had not inquired at their local election committee before the

months and whose names had not been placed on the election register in their new districts. These persons had not inquired at their local election committee before the election, per the prescribed procedure, and did not receive ballots on election day. This was a very minor problem, affecting only a small number of voters.

The task of forming a coalition has fallen to the CDU's Lothar de Maiziere, in his capacity as the leader of the party that received the most votes. In all likelihood, he will be the GDR's next and last Prime Minister. de Maiziere is currently striving to form a national unity government that would incorporate all of the major parties, excluding only the PDS and left-wing fringe groups.

### **POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS OF RESULTS**

The first free elections in East Germany had both an unsung and a forsaken hero. The unsung hero behind the scenes is the Lutheran Evangelical Church. Known for its good services to dissidents and other marginal members of GDR society during the SED's rule, the church has also been an invaluable facilitator during the rocky transition to democracy. It moderated the round table, helping to bridge positions that initially appeared irreconcilable, it exhorted citizens to staff the 22,000 polling stations, and it provided shelter to its former persecutor Erich Honecker when he was stripped of all power and reviled by most.

If the church is the unsung hero in the process, New Forum and its left-leaning allies are the forsaken heroes of the revolution. These brave, idealistic individuals who non-violently confronted the truncheons and water cannon of the Honecker regime last autumn, were rejected by their compatriots for their hesitation over unification. The vast majority of East Germans wanted unification on track before there was any consideration of fine-tuning the process. They perceived the New Forum members as unrealistic with their adherence to a vague concept of finding a "third way" between capitalism and communism.

Nevertheless, many East Germans and foreigners, even those who did not support the platform of Coalition '90, had respect for its members' integrity and sympathy for their idealism. After the election, a supporter of Coalition '90 said: "The thinking man is always destined to be in the minority in any system of government." There is, of course, some truth in that bitter statement.

The more prominent losers in the election were the Social Democrats. Expected to win between 32-35% of the vote, they ran a poor second to the CDU, capturing only 22% of the seats in the new Parliament. Many commentators view the election results as a victory for the Deutsche Mark, noting that Kohl promised the most help and looked to be in the best position to deliver. The FRG SPD favored unification but tempered

this upbeat message with warnings of the resulting high social and economic cost West Germans would have to bear. This ambivalent message, combined with the East SPD's failure to articulate a distinctive platform, displeased an electorate that wanted quick and, if possible, painless transformation to a mixed market economy. Hence, the SPD, like those groups to its left, were rejected by the voters for seeing the issues in shades of gray instead of more simplistic black and white.

As for the victors, the primary winner was the East German people who chose, for the first time in the GDR's history, their government representatives. In the last weeks of January, many feared the GDR was rapidly slipping towards complete collapse as the government of Hans Modrow lost its remaining shreds of respectability after it was revealed that it had not fulfilled its promise to dismantle quickly the STASI. Rumors of anarchy, violence, perhaps even civil war were bruited about as the vacuum created by the lack of a legitimate government practically immobilized the country. The round table, to its great credit, held the Government together long enough to lead the country to a textbook model of clean, open elections.

The flip side of the election's affirmation of representative government was its repudiation of the Communists in their new incarnation as the PDS. Significantly, the vast majority of East Germans consciously perceived the election as giving them the chance to strip their former Communist rulers of all remaining legitimacy and power. Hence, even though the PDS racked up an impressive 16% of the vote among party functionaries and some relatively well-off voters afraid of what they would lose in a unified Germany, the total turnout demonstrated the overwhelming general rejection of the party, its ideology, and its harsh 40-year rule.

Separating the party from its leaders, the 16% figure also offers testimony to the widespread respect for Hans Modrow, a reformer in the SED before it was a safe or popular stance, and to the skill of new party leader Gregor Gysi, who displayed wit and intelligence throughout the campaign. The PDS (and the SPD) did well in Berlin and the northern districts, reflecting the strong north-south divide in overall voting patterns. Voters in the industrial wastelands of the south which have been ravaged by pollution and decades of mismanagement, produced the most fervent support for the CDU while the relatively better-off voters in the north gave greater support to left-leaning parties that favored a gradual reunification process.

The defeat of the PDS could not have surprised the Soviets and they may even have been pleased by the party's respectable showing. Nevertheless, they must have been dismayed by the landslide victory of the CDU with its mandate for rapid unification. The vote increases the pressure on the four Allies and the two Germanys to come to terms quickly on the international aspects of unification.

The most important issue in German-Soviet relations is also the key external question raised by the prospect of unification: namely, determining the security arrangements governing a unified German state. Given the collapsing state of the Warsaw Pact, at stake is whether a unified Germany will be neutral or a member of NATO and, if a NATO member, under what conditions. The participants in the "2 + 4" talks, which will address internal and external aspects of unification, include the two Germanys and the four Allied Powers. Key concerns the six nations will confront include determining the size of the armed forces of unified German state, working out a timetable for reducing/withdrawing Soviet and American troops on German soil, negotiating the end of the four Allies' Powers in Berlin, and reaffirming the German commitment not to become a nuclear power.

In addition, the talks will address the Polish-German border, a topic that had seemingly been long resolved until Chancellor Kohl, who will stand for re-election in December, reopened it in a ill-considered ploy to ingratiate himself with right-wing voters. Poland reacted with understandable alarm to Kohl's waffling on the question of whether a unified Germany would support the permanence of its existing borders. Poland demanded that the FRG issue a definitive renunciation of any claims to territory now belonging to Poland and also insisted on the right to participate in all "2 + 4" discussions of the border. Under pressure from home and abroad, Kohl was finally forced to retreat from his earlier ambiguous position. The six states have also agreed that Poland will be a party to all "2 + 4" talks on the border.

The controversy over the border did not spill over into the GDR election because all parties categorically announced their support for retaining existing German borders. Kohl's blundering did, however, discomfort the East CDU, which tried to distance itself from him. The border controversy also provided left-leaning groups with the chance to have some fun at the CDU's expense. A poster, authorship unknown but suspected to be the work of the leftist groups, suddenly appeared, proclaiming, "We demand a Germany with the borders of 1254. Sicily remains German."

This conflict demonstrates the inevitably powerful impact of developments in Germany on the larger European political landscape. Because the economic, political and security configuration of a mighty unified Germany, straddling the center of the continent, will exert a decisive influence on determining a new European order, the other European and North American states are watching the two Germanys with varying mixtures of satisfaction, trepidation, and resignation.

The priority concerns articulated by the CDU the day after the election were:

- 1) the early establishment of monetary, economic, and social union. The negotiations started will be continued and intensified.

2) the creation of the laender (state) structures must be swiftly promoted. We consider this necessary in order to have democratically legitimized people's representative bodies at all levels.

3) the German unification process must be embedded in the European unification efforts and is to be advanced in cooperation with our neighbors. The "2 + 4" negotiations and the CSCE process are the framework within which the development should take place.

4) the principle of loyalty to treaties is valid for the new government. (This is a reference to the Polish border.)

5) the Berlin Wall should be eliminated as quickly as possible as a clear sign for the growing together of Germany.

Authorities on both sides would like the first goal on that list, the currency or monetary union to be in place by July 1, or the beginning of August at the latest. The date is significant: remembering the mass exodus that started last summer, the FRG wants to have the system in place before East Germans take off this year, with bags packed for more than a month's holiday.

The currency union has provoked tremors in financial markets the worldwide, stemming from the fear that the merger will raise inflation and interest rates in the FRG, which will then push up interest rates everywhere else. In countries like the United States where growth is very slow, some analysts worry that higher interest rates could choke off business expansion, perhaps even push the economy into recession. Bundesbank president, Karl Otto Pohl, while worried about internal dislocations that will result from placing the monetary union at the beginning instead of the end of the reform process, has firmly stated that inflationary risks are minimal for the FRG because opportunities for new business investments in the GDR, including the purchase of real estate and plant and equipment, will sop up the large increase in the money supply. The same reasoning applies to GDR citizens who could spend about half of the estimated 160 billion in East Mark savings to buy apartments and houses that were formerly state-owned as well as stocks in newly privatized businesses. This would still, however, leave about 80 billion East Marks that would have to be converted to West German Marks (DM).

In domestic terms, setting an exchange rate for the powerful DM and the weak Ostmark is the key decision facing the two countries. The rate selected will basically determine the size of the West German subsidy to East Germans: an exchange rate at or close to parity, means a generous payment to workers, pensioners, and those receiving entitlement payments while one closer to the real relative value of the currencies would wipe out personal savings but help GDR debtors, like businesses with liabilities and payroll costs to meet. It appears that for political reasons the West German Government will

decide on a 1:1 rate for a certain proportion of savings, although the funds may be released in tranches to give to prevent East Germans from going on huge spending sprees in the West before their own stores are able to supply them.

The FRG and GDR are also grappling with the harmonization of their social security systems, a complex issue which requires standardizing their welfare, pension, unemployment, educational, and maternity benefits, to name a few. Parties on the left of the spectrum based their campaigns to varying degrees on the public's fear of the cost of capitalism in the GDR election, with the SPD, for example, asserting it would make sure that the social security needs of GDR citizens are protected before unification occurs. The PDS's campaign blatantly played upon fears that the introduction of capitalism would create a world of ruthless competition where the weak, poor, and elderly are simply discarded.

The internal debate on the political dimensions of unification has revolved around whether the GDR's accession to the FRG should be accomplished under Article 23 or Article 146 of the West German basic law, its de facto constitution. Under article 23, unification could occur quickly because the law allows pre-war German regions to vote to become a part of the FRG. The GDR as a whole or the individual laener could follow this process, which requires no changes in the basic law whereas article 146, the slow route to unification, mandates the rewriting of the West German Constitution. The purpose would be to give legal foundation to the GDR's accession, but many centrist and conservative West Germans fear left-wing East and West Germans would also try to use the opportunity to insert new laws enhancing the FRG's already elaborate social network and expanding the powers of trade unions.

The East CDU favors unification via article 23 because of its speed and their victory gives the two nations a mandate to pursue unification post-haste. CDU chairman Lothar de Maiziere, however, has been careful to point out that his party supports accession by article 23 only at the end of negotiations between the two Germanys and only by the GDR Government, not by the individual states. Even if unification takes place quickly via article 23, it will still require much time and effort to reconcile different systems of law, property ownership, medicine, taxation, and welfare.

Approval of unification requires revising the GDR Constitution, which needs the support of a two-thirds parliamentary majority. With this in mind, the CDU is seeking to form a grand coalition that includes not only its natural ally, the League of Free Democrats, but also its largest rival, the SPD. The SPD's conditions for joining are that a future government should immediately recognize the border with Poland and existing ownership rights in East Germany, and, after unification has occurred, not allow NATO troops to be stationed on formerly GDR territory. The SPD appears to have resolved its reservations over joining a coalition that includes the DSU, which it accused, among other things, of having waged a particularly unfair campaign.

All of these conditions are probably acceptable to the CDU, but in recent days the legacy of totalitarian rule has again interfered with current planning for the future. Allegations have surfaced that up to 10% of the newly elected members of the Volkskammer once served as STASI collaborators or informers. Both Ibrahim Boehme, leader of the SPD, and Lothar de Maiziere, CDU chairman, have been tarred with the accusation, and Boehme has temporarily stepped down from his position. Werner Fischer, chairman of the citizens' committee overseeing STASI's documents seized after the overthrow of the Honecker regime, has called for an inquiry into the files of all of the 400 new legislators. The GDR's state prosecutor has said this would be an unconstitutional act since such an inquiry could only be instituted by the Parliament.

The issue is at a stalemate, with many protestors calling for a complete opening of all the files in the committee's possession while others in Bonn and the GDR fear the unleashing of a witch hunt that will derail the new government from its work. The controversy has already created another rift between the CDU, which does not want a widespread investigation opened, and the SPD, which favors a thorough examination of the files.

Since the STASI was present in practically every aspect of society, the question arises how far down the ladder should investigators go. It is eerily reminiscent of the Nuremberg trials and the fundamental question they addressed: how much responsibility does the individual bear for his/her acts in a dictatorship, especially one that was imposed from the outside?

The GDR needs a spirit of reconciliation to overcome the political fragmentation set in force by the new pluralistic playing field; however, real crimes, such as shooting individuals trying to cross the border, embezzling public funds, and imprisoning dissidents for non-violent political expression, occurred and should be punished. The new leadership, chosen with such an unequivocal mandate from the electorate, is receiving its first taste of the ambiguity that democratic government naturally entails, especially in a country trying to advance from a dictatorship into democracy.

East German writer Stefan Heym bitterly surveying the election results, noted, "Those who wanted a better GDR carried out the revolution but those who do not want a GDR at all are ones who won the election." It appears, though, that before the new government can move on and, in essence, vote itself out of existence, it will be compelled to come to terms with the country's past.

In deciding whether Wolfgang Schnur and countless other East Germans were bad by choice or by coercion, a mixture of good and bad, irrevocably corrupted or capable of reform, the new leadership will have to answer the same questions for the former system of government that produced these individuals. As they examine their country's sad

history, they may discover that values the East German people developed in adversity have relevance for the present. If so, then the GDR may not, as Heym and like-minded East Germans fear, become a mere "foot-note to history."